



3.21 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

CEQA requires a discussion of the ways in which a proposed action could foster economic or population growth, including actions that would remove obstacles to economic or population growth. Below is a brief discussion of general factors that could result in growth-inducing impacts. Following that discussion is an analysis of potential growth-inducing factors that could result from the proposed Headwaters Forest acquisition and associated actions.

In general, an action would be considered growth-inducing if it causes or contributes to economic or population growth. Growth-inducing actions are defined as those which would result in more economic or population growth than otherwise would have occurred from other factors. Thus, a growth-inducing action would promote or encourage growth beyond that which could be attributed to other factors known to have a significant relationship to economic or population growth. A growth-inducing action would directly affect community vitality.

Descriptions of proposed actions illustrate this concept of growth-inducing impacts. For example, the operation of a new mine located 200 miles from the nearest town with shops and services would likely stimulate residential and commercial development in the immediate project area or adjacent to the nearest major roadway. In contrast, the extension of electric utilities in an existing urban area would be considered growth-accommodating while the closure of a town's major employer would more likely result in economic contraction and out-migration of residents.

The analysis in this EIS/EIR evaluates three related actions—the proposed purchase of PALCO and Elk River commercial forest lands, the approval of PALCO's proposed HCP, and the approval of PALCO's proposed SYP. The final negotiation and purchase of PALCO forest lands by the federal and state governments would not directly affect area growth. The implementation of the proposed Headwaters Forest acquisition and Owl and Grizzly creeks, if that purchase occurred, however, could affect local economic vitality. As described in Section 3.13, the transfer of land from private ownership to public ownership would affect local government revenues from the PILT Fund, the California timber yield tax, and local government property taxes. A major increase of such revenues could allow local governments to significantly improve local services and/or employment opportunities that would attract people to move to the area. However, the potential revenue increases under each of the alternatives would not be significant and would not be sufficient to stimulate economic or population growth. The \$10 million authorized by Congress and the \$15 million authorized by the state for payment to Humboldt County could increase facilities or local services to the extent that they cause some level of growth-inducing impacts.

The transfer of the PALCO forest lands to public ownership could stimulate some local employment, depending on the scope of activities allowed to occur in the new acquisitions and the level and timing of any restoration activities implemented there. The initial management goals are to

provide the public reasonable access and opportunity to enjoy the Reserve. General public access would focus on non-disturbing, low-impact activities such as hiking, bird and animal watching, and interpretive education. Once the purchase of PALCO forest lands occurs, a detailed plan of management activities would be developed to more clearly define proposed activities, including habitat conservation and restoration activities. The intensity of proposed habitat management and restoration activities as well as the variety and duration of public access would determine potential effects on local employment. Despite the lack of a detailed management plan, the generally high unemployment levels in Humboldt County suggest that it is unlikely that creation of the Headwaters Reserve would result in significant growth-inducing impacts.

The proposed HCP focuses on the preservation and future management of wildlife habitat and the protection of endangered plant and wildlife species. As such, it affects the location and timing of timber harvest activity in the SYP. Activities associated with the implementation of the HCP on PALCO forest lands could indirectly affect employment opportunities.

The proposed SYP, which defines future harvest levels on PALCO forest lands, would affect employment opportunities. This document defines the maximum allowable timber harvest volume for PALCO forest land for each decade of the 120-year planning period. The proposed volumes, however, are less than recent volumes harvested from PALCO lands.

Smaller timber harvests would mean fewer workers would be needed to fill logging jobs and fewer workers would be needed to fill positions at PALCO's five sawmills. As discussed in Section 3.13, PALCO has proposed to purchase additional logs from the region to boost production levels at its sawmills and minimize staff layoffs at the mills.

The volume of timber that would be required to make up the difference in historical sawmill production and anticipated output based on the SYP varies for each of the alternatives. For Alternatives 1, 2, 2a, and 4, the amount of timber required to be purchased would be feasible and effects on employment at the sawmills might be negligible over the first two decades of the planning period. In contrast, the amount of timber required to maintain current employment levels would not likely be feasible for Alternative 3 (see Table 3.13-9). As such, the potential effect of the SYP would be to sustain or reduce future employment opportunities associated with logging on PALCO lands and working in PALCO's five sawmills. Thus, the implementation of the SYP would not result in growth-inducing impacts.